

Alfred Bentley House
1509 4th avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5845

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ALFRED BENTLEY HOUSE

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Location: 1509 4th Avenue

Date of Erection: by 1870

Description: The small scale of the Bentley House is quite unusual. Its survival along with two other small-scale, gable-front houses in the older part of the survey area suggests that these dwellings may have been more common in Altoona's early days. Documents suggest the house was built using plank construction, a technique, that may be more common in Altoona than we yet realize.

Two stories with a windowed attic level, the gable-front house has two narrow bays with an entrance at the right front and an exterior side chimney. The house has been covered in aluminum siding and there is no exterior ornament beyond the projecting eaves and wide cornice molding with returns at the base of the gable. A shed awning with wrought-metal supports provides a minimal porch.

There is no hallway in this house. Inside, two rooms are set one behind the other, with the winder stair between house and kitchen shed leading to two bedrooms above.

History: The Bentley House is one of the oldest structures selected for further study, and may in fact be more representative of the first generation of Altoona's domestic structures than current examples would suggest.

John Wright owned the property until August 1868, when a 50' x 120' lot was purchased by G. A. and M. J. McCullough for \$150. They sold it to Alfred Bentley two years later for \$700. The elevated price suggests that a house was built during their ownership. Bentley, a molder, was first taxed in 1871 for a house and lot. The 1873 city directory shows him living at 1511 4th Ave., probably the same house since renumbered (the current No. 1511 was vacant on the 1882 map). When the property was sold at sheriff's sale to the Franklin Building and Loan Association in 1875, it included "all that certain plank house" 14' x 28', two stories, with a 10' x 12' kitchen attached.

Michael Conrad purchased the property for \$800 in March 1879. He appears in the 1882 directory, also working as a molder and living on 4th Avenue above 15th Street. By 1896, Conrad's widow, Lizzie, continued to live here along with Albert Conrad who worked as a butcher. When Elizabeth Conrad's executors passed the lot to Fred C. and Edna G. Conrad in September 1931, there was a two-story frame dwelling at 1509 and a two-and-one-half-story frame dwelling at 1511 4th Ave. (built by 1894). The Bentley House was then used as a rental property. Charles A. Bickel lived in the house in 1939. In 1946, the Bentley House and its 25' x 120' lot were transferred to Charles E. and Winifred Keyes. Charles Keyes died in 1965; in 1973 Winifred Keyes sold the house to Charles E. and Sue K. Hall, who kept it until 1978.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888. Deed books: W/49, Z/181, 39/337, 39/339, 530/49, 946/145, 1025/247. City directories. Tax assessments.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

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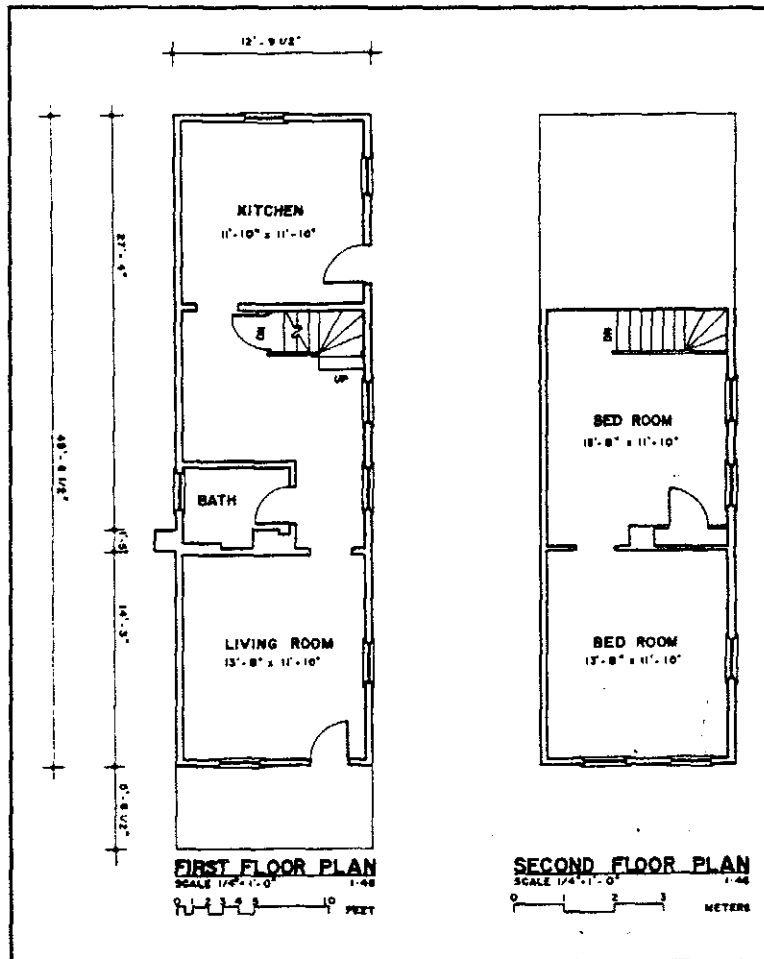


Fig. 1.1 First- and second-floor plans. Drawn by Anette A. Jensen.

Addendum To:
ALFRED BENTLEY HOUSE
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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